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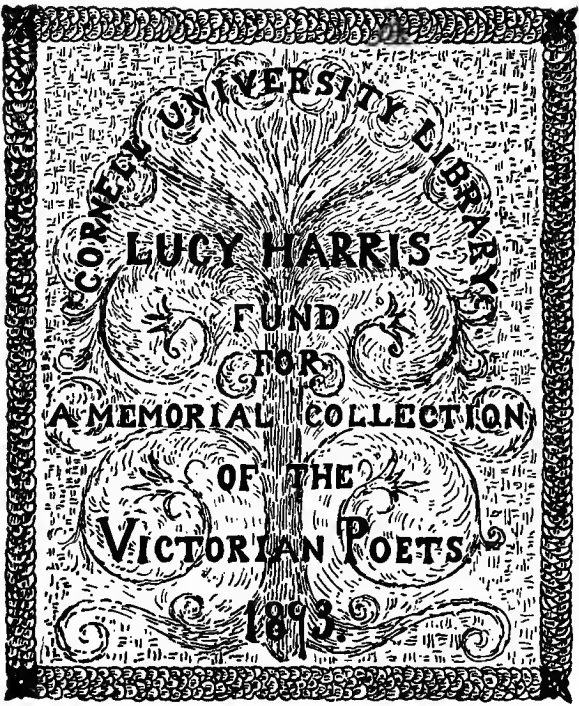

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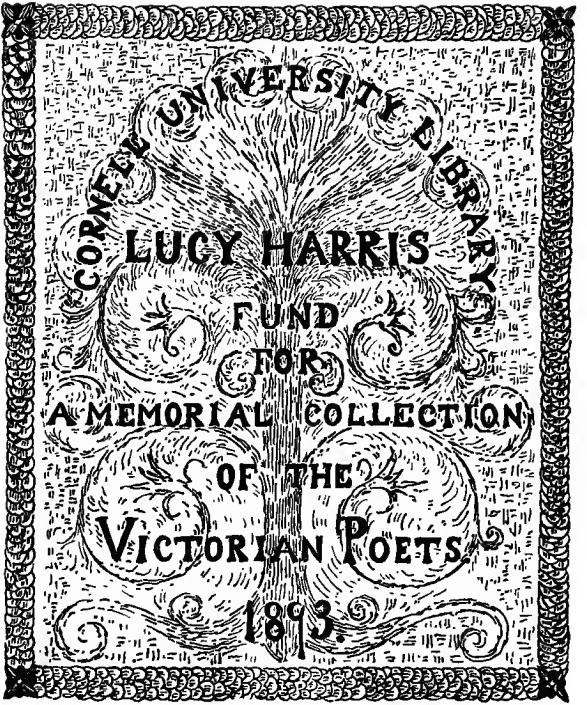
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SONGS OF A HEART'S SURRENDER

SONGS OF
A HEART'S SURRENDER

AND OTHER VERSE

BY

ARTHUR L. SALMON

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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PREFACE.

THE author owes his best thanks to Messrs Cassell for permission to reprint "Water-Babies" from the 'Magazine of Art'; to Messrs Virtue for "A Wood-Nymph" from the 'Art Journal.' Other pieces are republished, with kind consent, from the 'Windsor Magazine,' the 'Gentlewoman,' the 'Sunday Magazine,' the 'Academy,' &c.; but "The Monk of Rouen," "Our Lady of Tears," and nearly the whole of the "Surrender" now appear for the first time.

August 1895.

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SONGS OF A HEART'S SURRENDER.

SURRENDER.

A SEQUENCE.

I.

BECAUSE thy heart to mine
Spake with a call divine,
I did not question it, nor wait to know
That it was wise to give surrender so,
But down beneath thy feet I laid me low.
I did not wait to find
That thou wast loving, generous, and kind—
That love for thee would bring delight or woe;
But from within me, or above,
The mandate came to love thee, and I love.

II.

A word of thine can flood my heart with light
Or darken it with sorrow;
A word of thine can give me joy to-night
And peace to-morrow.

By thy dear lips my soul is sweetly stirred,
Or bitter pangs may rend her:
Thou reachest to the depths with one fond word
Or one untender.

Be gentle with this free unbridled power
That sways my full devotion—
Remembering thou canst rule me hour by hour,
As winds the ocean.

III.

Wise men whose souls have suffered and grown strong
With struggle, after conflict long,
Say that the heavenly love is won
By loss of what the earthly fed upon—
That such a love as mine
Is but a narrow path to the divine;

And if the soul
Would win that better goal,
Its gain must be
By loss of what it loves so utterly.
Ah me, ah me!—
I am contented with the lower love—
I am content to stand,
Mine eyes on thine, my hand within thy hand;
Nor hunger for a mystic recompense
Of soul-absorption beyond sight and sense.
I cannot rise above
The friend whose life is earthly as my own—
Who knows the self-same troubles I have known—
Whose faults I may have witnessed, and whose pain
Have laboured to restrain.
God pardon if it be a sin!—
Thy love is the best goal I hope to win.

And yet, with its great hush of calm and rest,
Perhaps—the heavenly love is best?

IV.

Belovèd, if the choice were given
Of earthly love or that great love of heaven,

And if the rapt repose, the starry height
Of peace and inner light,
Could only be
Secured by losing thee,
I fain would close mine eyes, rejecting quite.

Alas! I could not make the sacrifice—
So great a blessing at so great a price.

v.

I hold it close—a secret wondrous thing
That none may guess.
Why should my lesser friends come chattering
Around, and pry into its sacredness?—
My love shall lie alone
In the heart's silence, undisplayed, unknown.

Let others prate and babble, if they will,
Of their light loves, their liking each for each;
My lips shall shun such facile flowing speech,
Taught to possess their patience and be still.

vi.

Friend, the dear trouble of my love for thee
Hath wrought so wondrously

Upon my life, that now I view
All the old sights with vision that is new;
And where I once was blinded, now I see.

And though my footsteps range
In sadder paths since self-possession went,
Yet would I not exchange
The present trouble for the old content.

VII.

I would be strong—I would not so depend
Upon an earthly friend;
I will possess my soul and stand alone—
No bond-slave, but mine own.

So do I boast; but straightway meeting thee
All self-assertions flee.
A look, a pressure of thy hand, once more
Conquers me as before.

Belovèd, I am thine. Do thou with me
Whate'er thy will may be.
My light, my joy, my inspiration lie
In glances of thine eye.

I cannot cast thy mastery away,
Nor will I if I may.
Life's blessedness is not in being free,
But being bond to thee.

VIII.

Utter no word of thankfulness, dear,
For the true heart-service that I bear;

Because it is pain to hear you bless
My love for simply its selfishness,—

Selfish in bringing its all to you,
My dear-beloved, my good, my true!

For in bringing I greedily seek to find
Tenderest soothing of heart and mind;

In bringing, mine eager fingers fold
On rich returns of the purest gold.

I am simply as one who would invest
His wealth at the highest interest;

And so it is to your feet I bear
The little I can of love's service, dear,—

Thanking you now and eternally
For the gracious acceptance you give to me.

IX.

O come!—my doors are wide—
My garden-paths are free;
I wait to greet thee eager-eyed,
I pant for thee.

O come, and take my hand,
And flood my lifetime's dream,
As passes through a thirsty land
A gracious stream.

But if thou wilt not stay,
Like waves that ebbing lie
My hope, my peace, will pass away
With thee and die.

O come!—my doors are wide
To greet thy blessed tread;
Save when thou comest to my side
My life is dead.

X.

O golden idol, smirched with dust and stain,
My hand shall fondly wash the stain away;
Or, dimmed with tears, mine eyesight shall retain
Only the gilded ray.

I cannot look to see if there be blot—
I cannot ask if there be any wrong:
Love knowing many faults, may heed them not,
If love be true and strong.

All as thou art, with soil perchance of sin,
Wholly I love thee; and if fault there be
Or blemish, love can take the blemish in,
As being part of thee.

XI.

If I should quarrel with thee, friend, and say
Hard things from sudden spite,
Be sure my sorrow will revenge thee quite
Before the passing of another day;
So give me way.

Seek not to check the madness of my course.
Each word shall be a dart
To lodge and rankle at mine inmost heart.
Thou art avengèd by mine own remorse,
With sevenfold force.

XII.

Dear friend, I only love thee more and more
After this passing of an April rain.
Briefly the sun of love was clouded o'er,
Her place assailed by pain;
Until she shone more brightly than before,
That strife might see its labour was in vain.

In utmost height of jealous anger's fire
It was but love that looked from glowing eyes—
It was but love that took the garb of ire,
A shallow foolish guise;
It was but love's importunate desire—
Love that is always true, not always wise.

XIII.

Wait not the morrow but forgive me now:
Who knows what fate to-morrow's dawn may bring?
Let us not part with shadow on my brow,
With my heart hungering.

Wait not the morrow, but entwine thy hand
In mine, with sweet forgiveness full and free.
Of all life's joys I only understand
This joy of loving thee.

Perhaps some day I may redeem the wrong,
Repair the fault—I know not when or how;—
O dearest, do not wait—it may be long—
Only forgive me now.

XIV.

Let others share thy joys, if I may share
Thy tears.
I will become a comrade of thy care,
A partner of thy fears.
Let them the confidants of gladness be,
But tell thy grief to me.

In all thy want and sadness I would fain
Be near;
Seeking to bring a solace for thy pain,
Longing to soothe and cheer.
But when thou hast been lightened of thy woe
I am content to go.

I am content to leave thee then,—my task
Is o'er;
Yet when the sorrow comes again I ask
To see thy face once more.
I can resign thee when thy life is glad,
But not when thou art sad.

XV.

When the sun sets with slowly fainting light,
Leaving the heavens to mourn his vacant throne,
There come the patient stars, and night
Takes that calm thoughtfulness which is her own.

O love, thy seat is void; and there have come
No stars, no patience, no forgetfulness;
Hunger that must be dumb
Aches with a pain that must be passionless.

When the sun sets with broad surcease of light,
Does the wide heaven remember or forget?—
Would the reft soul do right
To seek oblivion, or to nurse regret?

XVI.

Beyond the splendours of triumphant love—
  Love that has striven and conquered and possessed—
There is a further peak, a height above,
  Where I must teach my timid foot to rest.

Love beyond love is that which I would reach,—
  Love that prefers thy happiness to mine.
If to have won were glory passing speech,
  Perhaps it is more glorious to resign;

Perhaps there is reward for love like this,
  For giving up what seemed life's very best?
I know not yet. My single duty is
  To find life's joy in knowing thou art blest.

OUR LADY OF TEARS.

LOW on her dying bed a woman lay,
Her forehead crimsoned with the setting light;
It seemed the unfettered soul must flee away
Before the passing of another night,—
It seemed the heart must cease its troubled beat
Ere the day dawned across the fields of wheat.

Not pain was on the face, but weariness—
Not trace of tears, but lines of lingering care;
Yet all who saw those features must confess
That here lay one who once was very fair;—
So fair, the painter sitting by her bed
Forbore to paint, and gazed at her instead.

But he, her husband, saw upon her face
More than a stranger's eye might ever see.
The ghosts of vanished time were in the place,
Keeping their mournful watch as well as he;—

How can he wield the brush with trembling hand
While all those shadows by his canvas stand?

They come in crowds upon the golden flush,
  In that bright vision of the setting sun,
While o'er the solemn land there falls the hush
  Of peace fulfilled and weary labours done;—
How can he check the madly welling grief
From bursting forth to seek a wild relief?

For on her face he read of other days—
  Days when they first had rambled hand in hand,
Before the shadow fell across life's ways
  Like clouds of storm across a lonely land;
And on her face he read of love whose light
Could not be quenched by death's approaching night.

"Love," she had murmured, "will it comfort thee
  To keep a likeness of this poor pale face?
Perchance 'twill serve to quicken memory,
  When I have gone unto my resting-place."
And he, whose heart with choking tears was faint,
Drew forth his canvas and began to paint;—

Painting, while life was ebbing from her eyes,
  While death's chill waters crept around her feet.
And still there came from sunset's open skies
  A parting glow most wonderful and sweet,
Such as an artist ever loves to claim
And make his own—a glorious altar-flame,

Playing across the pallid countenance
  As plays an aureole round a Virgin's brow;
So that the painter, in a sudden trance,
  Forgot the coming darkness in the *now*,—
Forgot the pain, the tears, the agony
Of that long parting which so soon must be.

Her face transfigured in the flooding gold—
  Her eyes so bright, so strangely fixed on him—
He did not notice that the deathly cold
  Had touched the brow, and made the eyes grow dim;
But there all calm and beautiful she lay,
The girl he wooed in love's tumultuous day.

And there the clinging mists of death arose
  Before her lips could sigh a last farewell.
No sudden pang or struggle at the close,
  But like a dying wave the life-stream fell,—

Like a lost wave that dies upon the shore,
And sinks into the sand for evermore;

As fades a star upon the front of night
When dawn's grey finger wipes it from the sky;
As falls a running brook into the might
And vastness of the ocean. By-and-by
The painter stayed his hand—drew near the bed—
Whispered her name—and saw that she was dead.

Dead, with this picture as a legacy
For famished love to feed on; dead, with all
The hopes of happiness that was to be
Lying around her like a funeral pall;
Dead, and the eye that gazed upon his own
Was fixed and glassy, and the heart was stone.

Dim in the west the smouldering embers died;
Faintly the wind disturbed the dreaming flowers;
But there with tearless wonder at her side
The painter sat, through night's mysterious hours.
Once a glad village maiden—once his wife—
And now,—how sad, how strange a thing is life!

Day dawns on every night, however long;
Day dawns on every grief, however wild.
The soul that in the hours of dark was strong
Becomes at daylight's dawn a very child.
He had not wept before, but now his eye
Was wet, for morning's gleam was in the sky.

The so familiar flush of early red,
How often it had called him from his rest!—
But now he quickly rose, and veiled the dead
With careful touch, lest sunbeams should molest.
It was not meet this sad deserted clay
Should be the mock of ghastly prying day.

Through weary hours he could not realise
What had been taken from his life. He went
About the lonely house like one who tries
To find a reason for his discontent.
"Why does my hand refuse to paint?" he said;
And then would soon remember, "She is dead."

When one has staggered 'neath a fearful blow
One hardly feels at first a twinge of pain;
But soon the faint unconsciousness will go,
And eager anguish rack the heart and brain.

A man may smile upon the day of loss,
But on the second day will writhe and toss.

They buried her without the city wall,
  In a small graveyard on a grassy hill;
There could the rain or sultry sunlight fall,
  Flower or weed could blossom there at will.
"What matters it," the lonely painter said,
"If weed or flower spring o'er her, being dead?"

And from the graveyard he would turn away
  To his sad chamber's quietest recess,
Where in a hallowed place the canvas lay
  That was a record of her loveliness.
Here she was truly buried. He would stand
And sometimes add a touch with trembling hand;—

Only such lines as memory would say
  Might give her face a more familiar look.
Here he would sometimes sit the livelong day,
  Making a chapel of the sacred nook;
Lo! it became his solitude for prayer,
As though he reared a private altar there.

Perhaps he made an idol of the frame
  Which merely imaged a dead woman's face;
Perhaps the stern might give a bitter name
  To the fond words he uttered in that place.
And yet his praying was directed all
To the gray crucifix upon the wall.

And if beneath the Cross he dared to rest
  The picture of his lady, which of us
Can say he has an altar in his breast
  Where earth and heaven are not commingled thus?
Which has a secret temple of his own
Where God is worshippèd, and God alone?

All have a picture or a relic, placed
  Beside the holiest Holy of their prayer;
Then let the narrow-souled and frigid haste
  To cast the stone of judgment, if they dare.
Such stones are apt to falter in their aim,
Recoiling on their heads that cast the blame.

This was the painter's sanctuary—here
  He found a refuge from the world's despite;
Forgetting how the shadows hovered near
  Of hunger, want—affliction's lurid night.

Poor at his wealthiest, he now began
To find himself a penniless hungry man.

Little his art could win him with its best.
Scorning to soil it with the tricks that gain
A fickle multitude, he had addressed
No foolish patrons for applauses vain;
He had not learnt that gifts may thus be sold
To basest ends, or falsified for gold.

And thus he won, as lofty natures will,
The wage of nobleness—neglect and scorn;
Starvation was the patron of his skill,
For her his spiritual bays were worn,—
For her he kept a solitude apart,
And offered life upon the shrine of art.

But he had wedded one who ill could be
His partner in such rough and cruel strife,
And she had faded uncomplainingly
Because her love was master of her life;
Trying to live on love and inward peace
Till God should send His angel of release.

Now that she slept beneath the churchyard grass,
His spirit yielded to the lassitude
Of grief and isolation. He would pass
Long days in listless solitary mood.
All hope and energy had ebbed away
Into the grave where his dear lady lay.

Sometimes for hours he gazed into her face,
Sometimes for hours he lay and did not stir;
So weak of will, he scarce could pray for grace
To love his Lord, and so be joined with her;—
So weak of faith, he thought that devils came
And taunted him with his dear lady's name,

As though she lay with them in lowest hell.
And then he roused and hastened to the priest,
The hideous fancies of his fear to tell;
And asked if yet her soul might be released
From torment. And the Father answered, "Yea,
By prayer and holy sacrifice it may."

Thus had he done one dreary autumn night.
Sullen and low the fires of sunset lay;
The leaves that once had rustled in the light
Of spring, now rustled rotting by the way;

And dismal moans, he could not say from where,
Came round his path like voices of despair.

Homeward the man returned, but misery
So preyed upon his soul with venomed fang,
That through the night his fancy foolishly
Tortured itself with many a needless pang;
And feebly—having eaten little bread—
He lay and tossed unresting on his bed.

But when the daybreak stole into the room
(As on that morning when her corpse lay there)
It seemed to bring him an access of gloom
By reason of contrasted light and care.
He closed his eyes, and longed that he might go
To join his wife in happiness or woe.

Simple and pure, she died with perfect trust
In the great Passion of her pierced God;—
Why should such nightshade blossom from the dust,
Now that her body lay beneath the sod?
Alas! full many a noble soul may bleed
Beneath the scourging of a gloomy creed.

So now—perchance the painter's mind was weak
With woe and famine—he became assured
It was his duty speedily to seek
Some means by which her peace might be secured;
For evil spirits whispered constantly
That she was whelmed in fiery agony.

Again unto the kirk he took his way.
The priest was poor and ignorant, but wept
To hear the painter's woe. He could not say
How long a soul in purging flame was kept,
But knew that every mass would lift it higher
Out of the pain of that eternal fire.

"Thou art a painter," said he musingly,
"And thou art poor. Perhaps we may contrive
Some bargain with thy want and poverty:
And thou shalt find that Mother-Church will drive
No niggard dealing. Let me come and see
What kind of place a painter's home may be."

So homeward with the widowed man he went
To see his treasures—fragments manifold
Of work abandoned by the discontent
That ever is a critic stern and cold;

And there he caught a sudden partial look
Of the dead woman's portrait in its nook.

Struck by the heavenly beauty of her face,
He stood to gaze. "Why, here," the Father said,
"Thou hast Madonna of divinest grace.
What eyes of loving light—how fair a head!
She should be yonder on my chapel wall,
Where shriven sinners may adoring fall."

"Nay, nay," the painter answered, "'tis my wife;
I drew her face when she lay down to die.
None other solace in my lonely life,
None other refuge from my griefs, have I."
But still the priest exclaimed, with greedy eyes,
"It is our blessed Queen of Paradise.

Her place is in my chapel; she should be
Shrined at the altar, where the taper's light
May fall upon her face perpetually,
And where is frequent worship day and night."
Yet still the painter answered him, "Nay, nay—
It is my wife upon her dying day."

"Son," said the priest, "this worthy piece of thine
Will pay for masses for thy dead wife's weal;
Perhaps our Lady's self, with love divine,
To her dear Son will tenderly appeal,
And shorten, for thy sake, the purging fires
Which otherwise a jealous God requires."

Mute was the painter. It was hard to part
With his belovèd portrait; but he thought
How harder far to bear the bitter smart
Of purgatorial pains. He had been taught
A doctrine pitiless and sad indeed,
Seeing God darkly through a darkened creed.

At length he yielded, for his love was strong;
And from its dusky nook the picture came.
That evening in the church at vesper-song
His portrait caught the sunset's dying flame;
And those who worshipped saw that from the shrine
Madonna looked, with countenance divine.

Low on the step the weeping painter knelt
Before the Virgin, once his loving wife.
Now he could freely worship her. He felt
That here it would be well to pass his life

In adoration; earthly love became
A heavenly duty—Love had changed its name.

Often the taper's light revealed the form
Of the pale painter on the altar stair;
Often the early sunrise rich and warm
Glanced through the casement, and beheld him there;
And often through the hours of starless night
He lingered still, until the east grew white,

When homeward he would steal with trembling pace,—
That home so strange and desolate and drear,
Where every corner was a haunted place,
And spectres lurked that smote his heart with fear.
How sad it was to wander to and fro
Nursing remembrance of the long ago!

Perchance these lonely broodings wrecked a brain
Which had been ever delicate and tense.
That genius is not often wholly sane
Has oft been urged by men of common-sense;
The finest souls will sometimes go astray
And lose themselves on life's perplexing way.

It chanced one morn the painter rose from bed
  After a night of pain and wakefulness;
And forth towards the holy kirk he sped,
  Whose influence ever seemed to soothe and bless.
There on the lowly altar-step he fell,
And gazed into the eyes he loved so well.

The eyes—what eyes? Another head was there—
  A cheap madonna with a yellow face
And staring look, on which the taper's glare
  Gloated, as o'er a manifest disgrace—
A paltry daubing. With a sudden bound
The artist leaped and tore it to the ground;—

Tore it and spurned it with his frantic feet,
  Spitting with scorn upon the gaudy thing
That had expelled his lady pure and sweet
  From her most fit and worthy harbouring,—
A vulgar winking splash of yellow and red,
Meet for an alehouse or a barber's shed.

The simple priest, whose ignorance of art
  Fathered this burst of sacrilegious ire,
Had changed his Virgin at a neighbouring mart
  For a more striking piece that worked with wire;

And the good man with pardonable pride
Deemed it a glorious bargain on his side.

Wonders of grace already had been wrought
  Upon the folk that came for evening prayer,—
Poor folk, all credulous and little taught
  With such small learning as the priest could spare.
Marvelling, they knelt before the wondrous shrine,
To see the Virgin wink with smile benign.

But the wroth painter, sharing not the pride
  Of the good priest, the people's fond delight,
Scattered the riven canvas far and wide,
  His eyes with eager fury flashing bright.
'Twas near the morning mass, and many came
Drawn by the wonderful new Virgin's fame.

With horror at the frenzied impious deed
  They seized the man, and dragged him down the aisle,
While many a simple sinner's heart did bleed
  To see the torn madonna's plight the while;
With woful moan they swept the pieces small
Into a heap, and wept above them all.

Forth to the prison-house the man was borne,
  Charged with his sacrilege and blasphemy;
But when they sought him on the morrow morn
  They found him raving incoherently,
And so they put him where 'twas safe to rave—
In a low dungeon by a stagnant wave.

Many a mortal has been burned for less;
  But they were merciful, and let him rot
In a dark hole of filth and noisomeness,
  Because they thought he comprehended not
The horror of his crime. They let him lie
Beyond the reach of sun and open sky.

Who knows what came of him, or how he died?
  He simply vanished from the light of day;
And men toiled on from dawn till eventide,
  Unthinking of the dungeon where he lay.
Another Virgin caught the taper's light:
He lay and withered in unchanging night.

What were the spirits that approached his side?
  What spectres came and took him by the hand?
Did she who passed into the morning-tide
  Come to allure him from this sunset-land?

Or did the gibing fiends of hell come round
To mock his wretchedness with sight and sound?

How long he lingered in his sunless den
  Has ne'er been writ in history's sad page.
He passed beyond the memory of men,
  As most must pass. The records of his age
Tell not his story, but its details lie
On scrolls that shall be studied by-and-by.

And to this day, on some old palace wall,
  His lady's portrait fills a dim recess;
And strangers, when their eyes upon it fall,
  Linger and marvel at its loveliness.
But when they ask who painted it, the same
Reply is always given—none knows his name.

TRIAL BY ORDEAL.

I DREAMED that I was lying stiff and cold,
Slain by neglect and false forgetfulness;
And many friends came one by one to hold
My hand, and speak their small or feigned distress,—
None caring much to know
By whose undoing I was lying low.

As one by one they came and took my hand,
The lifeless body heeded not a whit;
Till thou before the pale chill form didst stand,
And took the drooping hand, and spake to it.
Then did the life-blood start
And flow once more from my poor piercèd heart.

How could I lie in motionless repose
While thy warm hand so gently circled mine?

Would not my heavy sealèd lids unclose—
My wondering eyes gaze upward into thine?
Belovèd, could I lie
In dreamless slumbering when thou wast nigh?

As in old days the slaying hand was shown
By the fresh bleeding of the shrouded dead,
So the dear author of my woe is known
By the old wound, the life-blood oozing red,—
So strangely, for thy sake,
I shudder—I am quickened—I awake.

SONG OF THE SPRINGTIDE.

MORN, like a little child
Bright-eyed and winning,
Smiles at the meadows
Whose bloom is beginning.

In the blue distances
Cuckoo is crying;
Earth is forgetting
Her sorrow and sighing.

Gently and freely
The water-course passes,
Stirring the ivies
And kissing the grasses.

Thrilling with life and hope,
Breezes are blowing;
Thrilling with life and love,
Heart-blood is flowing.

Brimful of loveliness,
Rapture and singing,
Are the delightful days
Spring-time is bringing.

As to the meadows comes
Spring's resurrection,
So to the heart of hearts
Comes recollection.

Nature casts thought away,
Laughs at our sadness:
Ours is the pensiveness,
Hers is the gladness.

Morn, like a little child
Playful and winning,
Kisses the eyelids
Whose tears were beginning.

SUNDOWN.

BRIGHT sets the sun across the slumbering sea,
Touching with gold the ripples every one,
Gilding the sails that flap so lazily,
Bright sets the sun.
And hark! the winds and waters have begun
To breathe their serenade, fair moon, to thee—
To woo thy placid smile now day is done;
And at thy cloudy casement we can see
Thy form appearing, like a maiden won,
While o'er the world of waters far and free
Bright sets the sun.

AFTER HARVEST.

THE harvest now is over, and the sheaves
Lie dusky-bounden on the granary floor;
Across the breezy meadow-lands no more
The gleaners wander out on golden eves
To gather fallen ears; but forest leaves
Are fiery crimson that were green before,
And squirrels gather in their winter store
Where here and there a breath of Autumn grieves.
Thus as I wander o'er the lonely scene,
And stop to listen for hushed melodies
(Only the fitful wailing of the breeze
Where birds have carolled 'mid their cloisters green)—
I ask the meadow-lands and forest-trees
If they are sad at thought of what has been.

SUMMER PEACE.

BROAD over stream and field and sunny skies
The peace of summer lies—
Peace in the lapping wave and in the song-birds' cries.

Peace in the dreamy clouds that faintly glide,
Peace on the uplands wide;
The old immortal peace that comes with summer-tide.

No trace of weary travail nor of care;
This gently stirring air
Is more akin to praise than penitence or prayer.

If here on earth such blessed peace may be,
Though known so transiently,
How deep the peace of God that folds eternity!

There also happy souls in summer's glow
Are led where waters flow,
And find the new-born earth like earth of long ago.

WATER-BABIES.

WHERE mosses green and cool
Creep round the rushy margin of the pool,
Like phantoms in the sun
The water-babies leap and laugh and run;
While from their baby-lips
The kissing wave for ever glides and drips,
And every golden beam
Is fain to lave them in its loving gleam.

They startle with their cries
The forest-echo where she dreaming lies;
And timid wood-nymphs creep
From shadowy haunts to see them laugh and leap.
But when the sunlight fades
Along the tree-tops of the murmuring glades—
When earthly children rest
Upon the mother's gently-heaving breast—
These babies steal away
Into the wave, and sleep with sleeping day.

A WOOD-NYMPH.

IN the dim paths of glade and forest glen,
Afar from men,
Where only timid birds and beasts draw nigh,
She cries her lonely cry.

Sometimes the nesting sedge-birds see her float
Adown the lilies white,
Guiding the passage of her slender boat
With oars of pale moonlight;
Sometimes the couching wild-deer see her pass
Amidst the tangled grass.

Or by the shallows where the minnow breeds
She sits, and fondly binds
A chaplet for her brow, of faded weeds
And waifs of autumn winds;
Gazing into the wave with mournful grace
To see her own fair face.

No human eye hath seen her, or can know
Her secret woe;
No ear, save beasts and birds that linger by,
Can hear her lonely cry.

TWO LOVES.

TWO loves had I; a star of morning one—
The other like the rising of the sun.

Two loves, two dreams! The one made haste to fly;
The other has a life that may not die.

Two hopes, two aims. The one is lost in light;
The other still eludes my closest flight.

I mourn for one beneath the rustling tree
Where haunt the quiet birds of memory;

But rise and follow when the other calls,
With scorn of obstacles, contempt of falls.

Perhaps 'tis well that I could never gain
The first—that I pursue the last with pain.

It may be that our life was never meant
For full achievement or complete content;

It may be we are taught by long pursuit,
Here is the seed-time, only there the fruit.

I cannot tell; but still the pangs remain:
Two loves had I, and followed both in vain.

A BURIED CITY.

DOWN, down, beneath the water's ebb and flow,
A buried city lies with homes and towers;
There, when the sun has set and winds are low,
I rock and dream for hours;
And softly floating on the dusky tide
In listless twilight rest,
I hear far chimes of buried belfries glide
Along the water's breast.

At times, methinks, when from the quiet sky
A cloudless moon in silver glory peers,
Its streets and gabled houses meet mine eye,
As in the bygone years;
The murmurings of many voices rise
In solemn mystic strain,
And vanished faces under brighter skies
Return to smile again.

The voices of my childhood's happy days
Come stealing upwards through the hush of night;
And through the lonely, long-deserted ways,
There streams a flood of light.
But ah, it is a dream, when winds are low,—
Too dear a dream to last;
And mournfully the waters ebb and flow
Above my buried past.

GRIEF.

THERE is a common form of misery
That tears away all cloaking and disguise—
That thrusts its weakness in its neighbour's eyes,
And says to all men "Look, and pity me!"
There is a grief whose forceful agony
Will not be hid, though hard the spirit tries—
A grief whose wretchedness to heaven cries
In street and market-place, where all may see.

Ah, these are bitter! But we never hear
The hopeless misery that withers some—
The inward desolation black and sere,
That longs for rest—where rest may never come!
The blasting woe that cannot force a tear—
The heart that slowly breaks, and yet is dumb.

THE EVENING PRIMROSE.

THOU dost not love the morning light,
The noontide hour;
Thou lovest the first-born peace of night,
Fair flower:

Not courting gaze of public view,
But glad to bloom
When stars begin to tremble through
Night's gloom.

How many a soul through sunny light
Is sealèd fast,
But opens to the touch of night
At last.

The gilded hand of sunlight's power
Has failed; but grief
Awakens into fragrant flower
And leaf.

SEA-DRIFT AND TANGLE.

BENEATH the troubled skies
There comes a moan of tempest far away;
And the low sea-coast lies
Reddened with conflict of the dying day.

O wash of weary waves,
I feel a self-same trouble in my breast;
My stricken spirit craves,
With like monotony, the boon of rest.

On the dim oozing shore
The sea-folk claim their tribute from the sea;
But I demand no more
What life's sad flowing may have brought to me.

The very wrack and weed,
Gathered and won with willing thankful care—
Do I not also need
To prize what wind and stormy wave may bear?

Can I not also reap,
Even in weeds and tangle of the shore,
Some treasure from life's deep—
Some gift that may be mine for evermore?

AFTER THE STORM.

THE storm has passed; yet still a troubled moaning,
A strange impassioned sob, comes fitfully.
Dost thou repent, and is there no atoning
For deeds of darkness, O thou wayward sea?

Too late this show of sorrow and contrition
For happy homes by thee made desolate!
Ask those for absolution and remission
Who look abroad across thy waves, and wait.

Long shall they wait, and, anguish-stricken, wonder
What keeps the steps of those they love so well—
Who lie beneath thy deep incessant thunder,
Cradled for ever 'mid thy surge and swell.

"FAILED."

FAILED of the goal which once had been my aim,
The distant port for which I once had sailed,
I think the graven words above my name
Must be "He failed."

Failed to achieve the vision and the quest,
The self-forgetting and self-sacrifice;
Failed to attain the heritage of rest
Beyond all price:

Failed to retain the birthright, having sold
For passing pleasure and from fear of pain;
Paying the wage of God's eternal gold
For timely gain:

Failed of the purity that purges sight,
The faith that nourishes with daily bread;
Failed of the hand that reaches through the night
To guide our tread.

Failed, having laid his hand upon the plough,
So soon to falter and so soon to tire ;
Failed, though the God of life may even now
Save as by fire.

However bright life's after-glow may flame,
If storms retreat that have so long assailed,
I think the graven words above my name
Must be " He failed."

"IF I SHOULD MEET THEE."

IF I should meet thee in a distant land,
Nought should I ask for but a smile from thee,
A silent pressure of thy clinging hand,
A glance of recognition full and free;
For not as strangers surely must we stand
In that far home beyond the eternal sea!
If I should meet thee in a distant land,
Nought should I look for but a smile from thee.

Loosed for a season is the golden band
That linked our lives in sweet community;
But I no other face save thine should see
'Mid all the concourse beautiful and grand,
If I should meet thee in a distant land.

THE MONK OF ROUEN.

A LEGEND OF SACRIFICE.

I.

IN ancient days there did near Rouen dwell
A worthy monk; his name I cannot tell.

At early morn and evening's silver grey
He loved to wend the quiet woodland way,

To hear the stream, 'mid fern and ivies blent,
Murmur its Paternosters as it went—

To hear the birds in leafy swinging nest
Repeat their *Aves* ere they sunk to rest;

Telling his beads at dawn or eventide
In the seclusion of the forest wide,

Where golden aisles lay paved with softest moss,
And branches twined in many a sylvan cross.

"Methinks," he said, "that here doth more abide
The spirit of my Lord the Crucified,

Than where yon Brothers in the gloomy cell
Care but for drinking deep and living well.

Soon might I there in sensual sin decay;
But here His love goes with me day by day."

Perhaps he erred. This solitary soul
Was selfish, timid. God can see the whole.

One autumn eve, at setting of the sun,
Our monk was brooding in the forest dun.

November's dying glory, golden red,
Lay round about him like a garment spread;

And in each fitful motion of the breeze
The dead leaves sighed beneath the jagged trees—

Fragments of song that in the dear spring days
Had echoed round them—lark and linnet lays.

Fondly the monk, with sober pace and slow,
Threaded the paths and dreamed of long ago;

Then as he gazed upon the saddened scene,
He bowed to thank his God that his had been

A way of peace—a path of prayer and praise,
Far from the world's delusive tangled ways.

Thus was he kneeling, when a footfall near
Among the leaves decaying, reached his ear.

He raised his eyes. A stranger old and gray
Stood in the crimson of the sun's last ray—

A way-worn man, with locks of scanty hair
Tossed in the wind above his forehead bare.

"O holy sire," his fainting voice implored,
"Pity I beg for sake of our dear Lord!"

No common griefs were his, no beggar's tears,
But mourning wrung from agony of years.

With bleeding heart the good monk heard his tale,
And held his hand, while pity turned him pale.

And now, a lurid light upon his heart,
Rushed in the memory of life's sadder part.

"O God," he cried, while conflict raged within,
"Forgive me!—terrible has been my sin!

Thou who hast given Thy Life divine for me,
And I but gave an idle heart to Thee!"

With stormy flash and glare the sunset fell:
The monk returned not to his convent cell.

Dead leaves whirled round him—biting was the air,
While on the forest path he lay in prayer.

Next morn the robins sang to God alone,
For from his woodland cloisters he had gone.

II.

In loathsome city dens, where want and crime
Make a foul hell of radiant summer-time,—

Where budding spring has neither birds nor flowers,
But sin is changeless through the changing hours,—

Where children sport 'mid hateful vice and gloom,
Forgetting that far off the daisies bloom—

Here, far away from all he loved so well,
Our monk in penitence had gone to dwell;

Had changed for din of mart and murky street
Those forest-minsters that had wooed his feet.

Sometimes at dawn he missed his little birds,
And called to them with plaintive loving words;

Sometimes he missed the coolness of the breeze—
The fragrance of the clover on the leas—

The prattle of the brooklets, and the glow
Of sun's last benediction, sinking low,—

That blessed light which like a glory lay
Athwart the mossy glades at close of day.

All these he missed—Thou knowest it, O Lord!—
He missed them while he thanked Thee and adored.

But when the loss was keenest at his heart
He sought one solace that could steal its smart;

He sought for men: "My birds," he said, "are
these;
These are my pastures and my forest trees.

These I must tend with loving watchful care,
Succour and save, and find them very fair."

So far away from where the lilies blow
He spent his life among the poor and low.

No haunt of sin so black, but there his feet
Would find a way, in storm or sultry heat;

No life so foul, but he in pity tried
To save. "For such," he murmured, "Jesu died."

How nobler than his woods and daisied meads
Was this grand battle-field of loving deeds!

And yet the gentle monk, my legend tells,
Pined for his thrushes and his heather-bells—

Pined for his woodlands, waxing pale and thin,—
Yet prayed to be absolved from such a sin.

"O Lord," in anguish he would sometimes cry,
"What servant is so profitless as I?

Here Thou hast gifted me with work for men,
While I repine for field and wooded glen.

Here Thou hast honoured me with toil for Thee,
And I am sad for bird and beast and tree!"

Then as a penance he would deeper go
Into the darkest haunts of sin and woe;

And home returned at night, on scanty bed,
Would dream that daisies grew around his head.

III.

Erelong a pestilence came o'er the land,—
Some said that it was God's avenging hand;

And nursing those who fever-stricken lay,
Our monk himself fell sick one August day.

Staggering home, with wearied aching feet,
He sighed for country breezes cool and sweet;

And then his senses wandered. "See," he cried,
"How bright the sunset bathes the meadows wide!

Methinks I hear the silvery cloister bell
Calling me home to vespers; that is well."

Awhile he faintly dozed. Those watching said
They caught the scent of flowers about his bed;

And happy smiles stole o'er the sick man's face,
As though he strayed in some delightful place.

At last he waked. A light was in his eye
That looked like health. He said, "The end is nigh.

Lo, it has pleased my Lord in these last hours
To lead my feet by water-brooks and flowers;

'Mid birds and grasses that I love so well
He led me out, and told me there to dwell.

He said, 'I knew that in thy secret dreams
Thy heart has still been with my birds and streams,—

That midst the daily peace which duty yields
Thou hast been tender for my clover fields.'"

Then they that watched around him, smit with awe,
A sudden glory on his features saw;

A glow, as of an upward gush of day,
Flashed o'er his face and dimly ebbed away.

Slowly he closed his eyes, and, wandering,
Died saying that he heard the skylark sing.

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